TRANSCRIPT— William Russell and Willerine Emma Taylor Russell

Fairview Community History Project

Interviewees: William Russell and Willerine Emma Taylor Russell

Interviewers: Tealey Ellis and Judith Robertson

Interview Date: September 6, 2018

Location: 26 Old Gap Creek Road, Fairview, N.C.

Duration: 01:13:49

Judith Robertson: I am Judith Robertson, a volunteer in the Fairview Oral History Project. The project is part of the North Carolina Room's Special Collections at Pack Memorial Library. The North Carolina Room's mission is to collect, preserve and provide access to the history of Buncombe County and the surrounding area. Items in the North Carolina Room include paper items, such as photos, postcards, manuscripts, maps and the like, as well as recorded histories from folks like you. All of the recordings made in historical collections for this project will become part of the permanent collection at Pack Library. Your interview will be transcribed with your permission, and preserved for anyone interested in local history as well as for future generations. With your permission, the transcript will also be added to our online database. Documents of all types including photos and letters will be stored in our climate-controlled storage area. They will also be scanned so there will be a digital copy on the computer. If you prefer to keep the documents, they can be scanned and returned to you. Our goal is to find missing pieces of information and record your first-person narrative regarding your experiences living in Fairview.

This is Judith Robertson recording the oral history of William and Willerine Russell at their summer home at 26 Old Gap (Creek) Road, Fairview, North Carolina, at 11:00 on September 6, 2018, for the Fairview Oral History Project for the North Carolina Room at Pack Library, and the Buncombe County Library System. The Conditions of Use form for sound and video recordings has been signed by the interviewee.

Tealey Ellis: My name is Tealey Ellis, I'm a volunteer with the Fairview, North Carolina Library Oral History Project. This interview information will be placed in the North Carolina Room of the Pack Library in downtown Asheville, North Carolina. Today, September 6, 2018, I am interviewing William Russell, and Willerine Russell, at their home in Fairview, North Carolina. Thank you, Mr. and Mrs. Russell, for sitting for this interview. Why don't we start with some basic information, some of which we talked about a little bit earlier, is where each of you were born? And it doesn't matter who goes first.

William Russell: That was a long time ago, and I can't remember. No, I was born in Norfolk, Virginia, in Norfolk General Hospital. My father was working in the shipyard with my grandfather and some uncles, and they'd moved up there and got a job, it was during the war, the big one. And I happened to get born up there, I didn't really want to be born there. Well anyhow, it happened, and I complained, and I got my mother to move back down to North Carolina about three months later.

TE: Okay.

Willerine Emma Taylor Russell: My name is Mrs. Russell, or Willerine Emma Taylor Russell. I was born in Harrisonburg, Virginia, at Rockingham Memorial Hospital. My

dad was overseas when I was born. And he got a job in Virginia, then he got a job in Maryland, and then my daddy said, 'We've got to get the kids out of here,' and we moved to North Carolina.

TE: And when was that?

WETR: Pardon me?

TE: What year was that, roughly?

WETR: Probably about 1950.

TE: Okay. I would like to pause just for a minute please.

TE: We're resuming the interview with the Russells.

WR: So, he told me about Stumble Weed, and then he showed me a plant, he called it the Adam and Eve plant, and of course, me, 'Why do you call it Adam and Eve plant?' And he said, 'Well,' and he pulled the one up and it had two round, looked like small potatoes, what do you call that-

WETR: Spuds.

WR: [laughter] Tuber. It had a tuber on it. He said, 'My aunt so and so, she had five husbands, and she used to cook this, and she knew which one was poisoned. One of them was deadly poison, the other one you could eat like a potato.' Joe Maynard was worse than me, he could tell you a story. I don't know if he ever had a working job in his life, I mean he was a hunter and a fisherman and he was a storyteller. But he told me about the Stumble Weeds, and I thought that was pretty good.

TE: Very interesting.

WR: And he showed me Creek Lettuce and all the ( ) but that was way up towards the boundary, and I thought it was this small place, twelve by twelve and he had seven kids, and a wife and husband in there. And I guess he had dogs too. But that's on my daddy's mama and daddy's side, and Grandpa Russell was a logger, I think I told you about how he met—.

TE: Yes.

WR: —his wife. Now Grandpa Sales—

TE: I'm sorry, you did, but it was not on the tape.

WR: I did?

JR: Tell us the story again.

WR: Oh, I didn't tell you about the story of how they met?

JR: Tell us again.

WR: Grandpa Russell and Grandmother Russell? He was logging in the area where that little log cabin was, but it was before then, and they were cutting off the mountain and now they call it the Blue Ridge or Mitchell, Mount Mitchell, the Parkway, and all that up there. They were cutting up there and my grandmother used to cook meals for the camp for noon meal, and that's how they met. And her name was Molly. Both of my grandmothers were named Molly. Molly Sales and Molly Russell, which I thought was odd too. It's hard to think how they got that name. I think it means something else, doesn't it? You don't know? Anyhow, that was my grandmother's meeting of my

grandfather. I don't know how my grandmother Vehorn met my grandfather Sales, but they lived pretty close to each other, up here, I think Garren Creek, Old Fort, in that area. Cedar Cliff and that whole mountain range from Cedar Cliff all the way to Flat Top goes back to Number Nine, if you know where Number Nine is, it goes way back there. My grandpa always told me stories, him and his cousins and brothers they used to burn from Cedar Cliff almost to Number Nine, and set it afire, and burn it, and they'd clear all the underbrush, and then they'd put the cows up there in the summertime, so the cows could have something to pick green in.

JR: Cause the new growth would come up.

WR: The new growth, yes. The new growth. As you can see that mountain right there, that's called Butler, see those houses up there? Well, we used to summer our cows up there because that was all fields, from right there all the way over to the other side—.

JR: Cleared?

WR: Cleared fields, it was like this right here, it was grass. And now it's nothing but trees up there. But that was like fifty years ago or better. The trees had over fifty, sixty years to grow. And I think there was only one house up there then, and that was Doc Davis's house, and Doc Davis used to live right down the road here. But on Butler Mountain that was just a great big pasture, and people would take their cows up there and pasture them on Butler. And they would keep everything eat off too, and it helped with Quincy.

WETR: Who got killed?

WR: Who got killed? Oh, we'll get to that in a minute. [laughter.] Anyhow, that just came into my brain, looking up there at it, but Grandpa burning off from Cedar Cliff all the way back to Flat Top, and Salestown and all that.

JR: Huge property.

WR: Oh yeah, thousands and thousands and thousands of acres. But they kept it burnt off about every two years, so it never started a big fire. I mean it was a big fire but it only burned the leaves, there was nothing else to burn, just the mountain, and who cares about a burnt mountain. There was no houses. Even when we lived here on this road it was all dirt and there was nothing here except a log cabin, right there, right where that trampoline is was a log cabin. That was it. Just a log cabin.

JR: Did you live there?

WR: No, my earliest remembrance of where I lived is in Oakley, in the Biltmore Bleachery. My father was a steam fitter, pipe fitter, they know him now as a plumber, called them plumbers. But he used to work in big factories, that's what he did on ships, pipe coverer, wrapping steam lines with asbestos.

JR: We will stop the interview again for a moment.

JR: We are resuming this interview, we took a break to go look at family photos on the walls, fantastic.

TE: So, you were still talking about grandparents, I believe is where we paused.

WR: Where they met, and where they lived, and what Grandpa did as a child. Grandpa lived in this area his complete life. When my mother was really young, and she was the

baby of the family, they lived in Oakley and she went to Oakley High School. They lived on Merchant Street. And then his son Willy, the youngest son, got out of World War II and he bought a piece of property, bought forty acres for like a thousand dollars, or eight hundred dollars, something like that, when he got out of the army. And Grandpa Sales' property was next door to Grandmother Sales, which was a Vehorn property. Grandmother Vehorn, Great-grandmother Vehorn, her husband died, I think early thirties. My grandmother Vehorn, I think she died in forty-four, and I have very limited memory of her. My memory of her, she lived in a two-story house with my Aunt Lillie and Uncle Lewis Vehorn. And they called it the big house. It had a big porch on it, and they stored underneath the porch, they stored nuts and fruits and stuff like that. And back then there was no electricity, so they had a spring house. The spring came right out of the mountain and inside the spring house they had troughs built where they put the milk and the vegetables and all that even before the ice man. But my great-grandmother Vehorn died in forty-four, and my memory of her, and I was less than two years old, and they had a wood burning stove, and of course, being a boy, I got in a bushel basket, and I was rocking it back and forth close to the wood stove and my great-grandmother said, 'Billy, you're going to burn yourself,' and I said, 'No I'm not, and just about when I got that out of my mouth the basket went over, I put out my hand on the wood stove, caught myself from going into the wood stove and I burnt my hand, and I can remember crying because it hurt. And that's about the last memory I have of my great-grandmother. And she was living with my (interruption). They was living—Aunt Lillie and Uncle Lewis—was living in the big house and Grandpa lived above the hill, up on the hill, in the little house. It had two bedrooms, a kitchen, living room. And no insulation. They heated with the fire

place. And my dad was on the road working, so I stayed with them all during the summertime a lot of times with them. I remember those days when there was no electricity, although we did have a electric fence and that was battery. Then Grandma and Grandpa built a house down in what we called the valley, on his property, and Uncle Lewis and Aunt Lillie moved up to the little house on the hill because the old house was over a hundred years old, it was kind of falling down. The kitchen was separate back in those days. It was separate from the house. You had a big house with an upstairs and the kitchen was a separate, one wall was the main house, but the other three walls was kitchen walls. And of course, in the summertime, it was always hot in there and that's where we ate, in the kitchen at a long table with chairs and I can remember my tin plate, I used to eat on a tin plate and sat at that table. And I can remember when the hog killing come, they'd killed the hogs and render all the fat in there and make cracklings for crackling bread. That was pretty good, they put it in cornbread and I wasn't that fond of it, but it was okay. I never got used to drinking buttermilk. I didn't like buttermilk. When they moved up to the—when Aunt Lillie and Uncle Lewis moved up to the little house where Grandpa lived, Grandpa, he was a sawmill guy and he used to mill his own lumber.

…

JR: We're resuming this interview after a phone call.

WR: We was talking about Grandma and Grandpa moving down to the house and Grandpa worked in a sawmill. Grandpa had three fingers because he worked at a sawmill so this finger was kinda gone. He cut his own trees down and milled his own lumber to build his house. I can remember—I was about six years old, or five years old, somewhere

in there—and we poured our own foundation, got the rocks out of the creek, we had a wooden form and we put the rocks in there and poured the concrete on it and then, that was a mix of things, and then we built the house on top of it. It was fuzzy lumber. I always called it fuzzy lumber because it was right out of the sawmill. When you said a two by four, it was more than a two by four because now the two by fours are like one and five eighths by three and a quarter or something like that. They're not two by fours. His was a fuzzy wood sawmill house and it had one, two, three bedrooms and a kitchen and a living room. No running water, not for many years and he had a spring, it came out of the mountain again, and there was a big old—what's those water trees? Willow tree. I was thinking of Weeping Willow but they're all willow trees. There was a great big willow tree and the water came out from there. Grandaddy said, 'If you got a crawfish or a lizard in your spring, it's good drinking water.' Because there ain't no crawfish or lizard going to live in that water if it's no good.

TE: Good to know if I'm out in the woods, I guess.

WR: I don't know about that (laughs). He also said when he was getting water from the creek—he had two creeks, he had the spring and he had the creek. But we didn't get water out of the creek, I didn't drink out of the creek. I seen a cow going to the bathroom right up above me, right, and Grandpa said, 'That's okay, it done run over three rocks, it's good.' I always believed the water was good after it ran over three rocks. And he had me believing that. But I was little. That was his saying, right there. He had a lot of sayings. I spent a lot of summers in my grandmother's house, and grandfather's.

JR: It sounds like you had fun as a child.

WR: Grandmother had one, two, three, four sisters. And they were the nicest ladies I ever knew. Never fussed at nobody, never gossiped. They would gossip among themselves, but they would never pass gossip on. I never seen my grandmother mad, not even at me. My Aunt Lillie, I seen her mad at me because she chased me with a cornstalk one day, but she never caught me because she was little. Aunt Lillie was my Uncle Lewis's, Vehorn, his wife. He's the one that moved in that little house that Grandpa moved out of and moved down in the valley. And his wife was like four foot seven, or something like that and he was like six foot four. And all of us kids, our goal in life was to get bigger than Aunt Lillie. So,when we got as tall as Aunt Lily, we were grown. That was the sweet thing about my Aunt Lillie and Uncle Louis Vehorn.

TE: What kind of crops did your family at different times grow?

WR: They were self-sustaining most of the time. I remember the Watkin Man. Ever hear of the Watkin Man? And the Coffee Man. We had two people who came by, the Watkin Man had all the peppers and salts and spices and flavors and stuff like that. That was the Watkin Man. Watkins. Watkins Man. And the Coffee Man always brought coffee. Coffee was a staple back in those days. It didn't do you any good but everybody had to have coffee. And again, there was no electricity. Uncle Louis finally got a icebox. An iceman would come once or twice a week and he'd bring fifty pounds of ice and put it in the icebox. Grandpa never had that but after a while he did get electricity. He did get electricity and it was good that he had electricity because when I was growing up, probably until the third grade, living with them, when nighttime come we had oil burning lamps. We've still got some of those oil burning lamps right now. That's all we had to light the night, was the oil burning lamps. That's why they went to bed at dark, because

they didn't wasn't to burn the oil. Kerosene back in them days was five cents a gallon. That was expensive. Now kerosene is more expensive than gasoline, if you check the price on gasoline. My younger days was spent most of the summers with my Grandfather Sales and Grandmother Molly Vehorn Sales. And William Merion Sales, my grandfather. Now, my grandmother's side, on the Vehorn side, and I mentioned earlier before we started taping, about the Fairview Cemetery. I go down there for family reunions when I go down there and meet everybody. William Jackson Vehorn—the only reason I knew William Jackson Vehorn is by history and William Jackson Vehorn was in the Confederate Army. Most of the brothers and such joined it in South Carolina. They were Vehorns, so they were at South Carolina. William Jackson Vehorn got killed right down here on Cane Creek. He got ambushed by Yankees in 1885. Just coming home, going from home back to South Carolina from being on a wounded leave, Christmas leave, he'd come home wounded and it was at Christmas and he was going back down to South Carolina to muster with his people and he got killed right down here. Mother always said it was bushwhackers. And he's buried up there at Fairview Cemetery. He had a bunch of brothers and most of them got killed during the Civil War. My Great-grandmother Vehorn, her husband got killed. Not Vehorn, Sales. Great-grandmother Vehorn, her husband was killed and she raised like four boys and a couple girls by herself. She was a strong woman. There's a lot of history in that right there, which I know about but I can't put it into words as far as being correct, and I want to be correct. But there's A through Z, so I can't remember that. But Grandpa was born when Great-grandma was hoeing corn in the cornfield up here on Cane Creek under an apple tree. She had to stop hoeing to have Grandpa. That's a strong woman.

TE: I hope she went home after that.

WR: I don't know if she finished hoeing. I never asked that question. I know this is not really in order of what we're talking about, but things come in my mind that stick out and it's kind of odd, but now this road right here we live on, Old Gap Creek Road, used to be called Possum Trot Road, and it was called Possum Trot until probably the sixties. Somebody stole the sign down here called Possum Trot. I got it at home. And they had to re-name the road. I didn't steal it, but I was given the sign. It came into my possession.

TE: Do you know why it was called Possum Trot Road? Were there a lot of possums on it?

WR: Well, right down here, my grandfather went to school right around that curve there. See there was only two houses right here. The house right here, the log cabin, and right down in the holler, we call it a holler, was, I call, her Old Lady Fike. Her last name was Fike. I think her husband was a traveling salesman. I don't know what he sold, insurance or something, but he was very seldom home. He had two daughters, Molly and Henrietta. And they were a little bit older than me. Their barn was grandfather's schoolhouse. They had like seven grades and they was all in one room. And that was called Possum Trot Schoolhouse. The foundation is still there, the pillars for the schoolhouse are there, still there.

JR: You think of a possum trot being the main cabin that people live in and after the family grows and they get the land cleared then they build another piece but it's separate.

WR: You know what a rabbit gun is? Rabbit gun, we had them when we was kids, it was no more than a box, a hollow box with a trigger in it and you bait it and you catch rabbits in it. The rabbit goes in there and hits that trigger and the door slides down. We caught more possums than we did rabbits. It was all Pine trees and Oak trees all through here. None of these houses was here back then.

TE: What were your neighbors like?

WR: I only had one.

TE: What were they like though, were they helpful?

WR: Everybody was helpful back then. Everybody knew everybody. There was no feuding or fussing around here. Oh wait, there was feuding and fussing. I forgot that. There was another house, right down at the corner. Whose house was that? It wasn't Blankenships there. What was his name?

WETR: Dean Dalton.

WR: No, before Dean Dalton was born. The big house right there where that pretty house is. Grandpa bought that but before that it belonged to—if my brother was here, I asked him to come up here but he didn't come. Anyhow, our mailbox used to be down there on seventy-four. You had to walk down to seventy-four to get the mail. Well Daddy was coming up to get the mail and he looked up, and old man whatever-his-name-was, had a shotgun leveled right at him. Daddy hit ground, boom, it went off and then Daddy ran down there before he could get it loaded again. But there was a shooting and Dad come up here and Mother stopped him from getting his rifle and killing that son of a bitch.

JR: But you don't know what caused him to—.

WR: He was feuding and fussing over something. I don't know. He was older, Dad was young. Dad died out at forty-nine years old. Dad was probably in his thirties when that happened.

TE: What's the neighborhood like now? Obviously a lot more houses.

WR: I went to school with this guy here. His son built and bought that place there. He's lived there for a while but now it's for rent. That place rents right now for twenty-eight hundred dollars a month. Twenty-eight hundred. Right there.

JR: That looks like a church. Is that a church?

WR: No, it's a house. Three-bedroom house. And after we lived here for about eight, ten years, Jack Wright built that house right there. And Dad give him a piece of property because our property used to go across the road and we didn't need that across the road, so he just included that. Jack Wright built that and then it was only one, two, three, four houses on this whole road.

TE: Do you feel a sense of community in this neighborhood?

WR: Right now, that house has, Jack Wright built it, he sold it to some Germans, who sold it—and they were nice people. They had that weird accent but I didn't have to speak to them. They were older and her son lived up on Garren Creek. They sold it to a guy that used to work with Dad, a plumber. And the guy that used to work with Dad, he gave it to his kids, houses and property. I think he had about fifteen acres there. We had about seven here. He had fifteen, he had a lot more property. And he had a barn. Right now,

Russians are living in it. The lady is a Russian, her husband is my cousin. An Earwood. His grandmother was—what's her name who used to live right across from where I caught the school bus? They had a daughter, they had a bunch of daughters. McGuinns. His grandmother was a McGuinn, () McGuinn. You didn't know that? And he knows the McGuinn side, but he doesn't know the Earwood side. And then we got the hippies moved in there, and then they moved out and then the older couple move in and they moved out about a couple years ago. We call this a tree fortress right there. He is a Penland, Penland Mortuaries. And then we got the hippies that live here on the corner here, they're out over the creek.

TE: Who were some of the leaders in early Fairview community that you recall?

WR: I guess it would be Happy Merrell. Did you ever hear that name before, Happy Merrell?

TE: I've heard the Merrell last name.

WR: The Merrell Store. Going up Garren Creek, right there where the old 74, used to be a general store there, suspiciously burned down. It burned down. That's where he had his store, general store. And that was the beginning of Garren Creek. And he had some cabins in the back they used to rent out. And then Merrell moved down to 74, that filling station on down the way right there. And then they got the fire department, the Fairview Fire Department, on the other end of it.

WETR: I thought it was his brother Guy that owned the—.

WR: Guy Merrell? Yeah, he was a Merrell.

WETR: Guy Merrell is the one that owned the store but his brother Happy helped out.

WR: Yeah, Guy and Happy Merrell.

TE: I know, I guess, a grandson or a son of those, John Merrell.

WETR: Johnny. Went to school with him.

WR: Johnny Merrell. That's another story. Down here on Cane Creek, the story is, I was coming back with my two cousins and two buddies from swimming at Royal Pines swimming pool. Coming down Cane Creek, I was driving a fifty-eight Rambler station wagon. There's a big curve down there and I'm doing a hundred miles an hour. And I hit that curve and I try to get her slow down, got her slowed down to eighty, almost went in the bushes. Back and forth, jumped over in a cornfield. Landed right side up, we all jumped out, pushed the car back up on the road and came home. There was mud to get off underneath and stuff from the cornfield. Now there's houses there. That would've never happen now. Johnny Merrell tried to do that, hit that curve at a hundred. I think he ended up killing somebody in that curve. I ain't for sure, but that—.

TE: What was—in your story about how fast you were driving takes me to what were your teenage years like living in Fairview? What kinds of things did you do besides driving fast?

WR: I didn't drive fast like that all the time. I only got two speeding tickets my whole life.

TE: What did you do as a group of guys or dating couple, what did you do for fun and activity?

WR: We were mostly outside.

WETR: Babe Malloy's drive-in.

WR: I didn't do that too much, couldn't afford the gas.

TE: Was this a drive-in kind of restaurant?

WR: What was the other one? Buck's Restaurant. That was what most of the rich people—.

WETR: Yeah, you had to be rich to go to Buck's.

WR: Buck's and Babe Malloy's. They had a radio station in Buck's, right? Upstairs. And the kids used to cruise that but they were mostly from Oakley and Oteen. That was right when we started to get all these high schools into one, like Oakley and Haw Creek and Fairview.

TE: Which high school did you attend?

WR: I graduated from A.C. Reynolds.

WETR: But the teenagers that lived in Fairview, were teased, we lived in "Far-view." Because we were over the mountain and the rest considered themselves city kids, but kind of be surprised how many of them are trying to buy land in Far-view.

TE: It's not as cheap as it was then, that's for sure. What was church situation like growing up, was that something that you attended every Sunday?

WETR: My family joined, it was called First Christian Church, in Asheville on 20 Oak Street. They have since sold that building to another church organization and built somewhere else. He would go with me to church.

WR: That was after awhile. I used to, still, belong to Fairview Baptist right here right above the restaurant. But I went to about three different churches. I went to Pleasant Grove Church, that's up Garren Creek, because my Grandaddy and Grandmother went there. And I went to Cedar Cliff Baptist Church which is not there anymore. As you start down the mountain on the left, two buddies of mine, their father was the pastor there. Paul Wright. We got married by Paul Wright, and my brother, Larry, got married by his son Daniel. But Paul signed the marriage certificate. Later on, when I met her, she got me going to church a little bit more.

TE: Did the church have many social activities to try to keep the teenagers occupied?

WR: Not like they do now. There was nothing like that. I really quit the Baptist Church because I found out that the Baptist Church tried to preach the hell out of you. I joined her church and another church and they tried to preach the heaven into you. And I liked being preached the heaven into me better than the hell out of me. I got up and walked out because it was just scary to me. All that screaming and hollering. I got nothing against either one of them.

TE: What kind of businesses and stores were here in Fairview for you to shop in during your teenage years?

WR: There was no shopping in Fairview. My Daddy put the plumbing in to Fairview Supply, right there at Cane Creek, where Cane Creek starts. Now it's called something else. Dickey's. It's been sold a couple times. I remember Daddy putting, I helped him put some plumbing in there. That was the Ledbetter store. Ledbetters had two daughters, they lived right down the road on the hill, Nancy and Gail.

TE: What kind of store was Ledbetters?

WR: Just a general store. I don't even think they had gas. It was just a general store.

WETR: They had hardware and stuff when I was a kid.

WR: Happy Merrell's place was more of a hardware. But there was a little bit in there. It was just like a little general store.

WETR: And then there was Howington's.

WR: Howington's little gas station? It's not there any more, it's where, right across from that vegetable place. I think they sold it and got a living area up there right now, a community up there. It's not that far down the road. This side of South Cliff. South Cliff you can see when the trees are not—.

TE: So, if people in Fairview in the time period we're talking about, wanted to say go shopping for some clothes, you had to go into Asheville?

WR: Saturday. That was going to town. I remember going to the bakery, Town House Bakery, you'd get a dozen doughnuts for sixty cents. Now a doughnut costs sixty cents. And they'd always throw an extra one in.

WETR: And we'd go to shopping at Sears, which is now I think the Social Security building.

JR: Social Services.

WR: We were never rich enough to go to the restaurant counter at Kress's.

JR: Yes, Kress's had a lunch counter. Still does.

WETR: I was rich enough. I had two summer jobs. One was babysitting three boys, and the other one was grading eggs. So, I was making about thirty dollars a week. And my friend and I would catch the bus right at Fairview School, and we'd go into the bus station, we'd walk uptown, we'd do our shopping, we'd eat at the counter at Kress's and catch the bus home. And think nothing of it. I wouldn't let my daughter today get on a bus to go there.

JR: Where were you grading eggs? Was there a farmer's co-op where you graded eggs?

WETR: It was called Beck's. Fairview School is here and it's the house right on the hill above it. And he had loads and loads of chickens and they would be collected and taken down to a cool room and my friend and I would—it was her parents that owned it—and we would go there after school and grade eggs and my mother told when I came home I smelled so bad.

JR: But you were rich.

WETR: Well, I thought. I had dollars.

JR: Was poultry raising a big thing out here at one time?

WR: There was one house and that was my buddy Trantham. Right there where the animal hospital is right now. Right down the road on the right. That's Woodalls.

JR: I've noticed a number of deserted poultry houses.

WR: There was one here. I can remember when I was in high school, we went to that poultry house and shoveled all the manure out of it. And put it on the school grounds with spreader machines. But there were no more chickens in there then. That was in '60, '61. Probably '60.

TE: One of the things I noticed when I moved to Fairview was just how many stonework businesses there are around. Seems like every time I took a drive and went somewhere I was seeing them. Has that always been?

WR: No. There's two stone houses. The general store right there beside the schoolhouse, and what was that school teacher owns that one right down here? Nesbitt. That was Nesbitt's General Store and Nesbitt's house. And then there was a couple—but as far as stonework, I'd say about ten or fifteen years ago it started like it is now. Because my grandaddy would roll over—you sell rocks? You have to pay for rocks? He was always complaining about rocks.

TE: What kind of store was Nesbitt's?

WR: It's just a general store.

TE: I guess that's what most of them were then in Fairview?

WR: Some of them less than general. The kids would go there after school because we couldn't go there during school, you'd go after school, and you'd get—a Coca-Cola was

like five cents and you'd get two cents back on the bottle. The big ones were like twenty cents, the two liter, they were twenty cents back then.

TE: What about gem mines? Were there any around that—.

WR: Not in this area here. Also, Grandpa always said that there was gold in his creek. My brother adhered to it, but I always thought it was mica, little chips and things. Mostly a little bit further west for the gems.

WETR: Where Franklin is, out that way.

TE: To your knowledge, hearing stories, what kind of transportation did people use to go to Asheville before automobiles?

WR: Remember I said Grandpa Sales worked in a sawmill? Grandpa Sales—you know the road that comes off the mountain here at Hickory Nut Gap? That road there, he used to drive a team of oxen to the sawmill from there to Oakley. The sawmill was in Oakley.

TE: How long would that take?

WR: Eight hours. He got paid a dime an hour. Ten cents an hour. And he would drive a team of oxen from there to Oakley sawmill with a load of logs.

TE: That's mind boggling. Ten cents an hour.

WR: At ten cents an hour. I said, 'Grandpa, I'm getting seventy-five cents an hour.' He said, 'I only got ten cents an hour.' That's when I worked at Colonial Stores as a bag boy, that was my first job. Seventy-five cents an hour. No tips.

JR: People walked a lot, didn't they? They walked incredible distances by today's standards.

WR: There's a farm down there as you go down the mountain on the left there, that was my—he was a Sales and he walked a lot. He got killed walking down here, he was in his eighties when he got killed down here, run over.

TE: What was the attitude community-wise when seventy-four was transformed into the four-lane highway that it is now?

WR: That's new, that's all new, anybody could know about that, even you almost. That's all new stuff. It used to be backed up to here for Asheville, especially when they was working on the road. Blasting the mountain. It wasn't always like that, used to be seventy-four was deserted until I guess probably until the seventies, and then it started building up, people started moving in here. That's when I was gone a little bit, in the seventies. I was on the west coast a little bit then, back in the seventies. But I would come back up here in the summertime and we'd go fishing. You asked a while ago what the kids did for entertainment, well, we'd go to the drive-in, once a week maybe. That's after we got our driving license. Before that we'd just be in the woods, fishing or hunting. There was nothing here, in Fairview we entertained ourselves. Climbed trees, climbed mountains.

TE: Were there any doctors in Fairview when you all were growing up here?

WR: No, no doctors. The doctor was in Bat Cave, Bat Cave Hospital. My mother worked there for a while.

WETR: The doctor's name was Dr. Burch.

WR: And before him it was Dr. Bond. And Dr. Bond was kind of a known doctor and then Dr. Burch took it over. And after that, it was nothing there, right? But a parking lot just about, at the Bat Cave Hospital. Dr. Burch, he was coming around the curve and some convicts that stole a truck and ran nose into him, he was in a sports car and killed his wife and hurt him pretty bad. But he lived down at Lake Lure, that main stretch down there. That's where he was mostly at.

TE: When you all were teenagers, young adults, living in Fairview, do you remember any individuals that were considered characters, that maybe were story tellers or—.

WR: Oh, storytellers. Well, not in Fairview.

WETR: I married one of the characters.

WR: No, I remember Joe Maynard, but he was out at the other end of Buncombe County. He was a character. But we always listened to their stories, Stirewalt he was—Granny and Pappy Stirewalt they lived over in Sharon Church Road. Stirewalts lived over there and Connors lived over there. Dad had a feud with Connors too. Mother had to grab a hold of him once, he was going to kill that guy. We used to fish with him at the lake, Spivey's Lake, and Woodall's Lake. They're still there, the lakes are, but right now it's called something else—.

JR: Spivey's Lake is still Spivey's.

WR: You didn't know old man Spivey? Old Man Spivey, he was a good guy. He was a good guy. That's back when you paid to fish. You paid a dollar for four hours. And you sold back the fish at a nickel a pound. Some of us made money. And at Woodall's Lake I

remember him, I fished there more. But Spivey's, I can remember opening day at Spivey's Lake.

TE: Mentioning these general stores again, and talking about characters, where I grew up, my uncle had a country store and that was a general store kind of thing and that was kind of a gathering place for the story tellers and the characters. Was there any stores like that in Fairview?

WR: The men didn't gather back in those days. I can't remember any guys gathering in Fairview. They do now. When you're retired now, you can be retired. But Grandma and Grandpa, they lived on sixty-four dollars a month Social Security. He farmed. I can't remember anybody—.

WETR: I think a gathering place today is KD's and they've got that little counter where you can buy breakfast and things and you can see older guys in there.

WR: And Citgo. I was in there the other day and there was four guys in there. And one of them was, he graduated three years before me. I can't remember his name. The other guys I didn't know. They're like you—implants. What is his name? You would know him by name.

TE: Tell us about your high school experiences.

WETR: It was good. In fact, we live on the coast right now and I saw a post and her name is Nancy. I said, 'Girlfriend,' because she took a picture that I know well and said, 'Cherry Point Air Station.' I said, 'You better get in touch with me, or I am going to drive all over Cherry Point until I find you.' So, I googled their name and got their phone number and sure enough. We graduated together, our class reunion is Saturday, and we

went out to breakfast and started the reunion right there. It was just amazing, absolutely amazing.

WR: She was on the high school square dance team.

WETR: I was. A.C. Reynolds—.

WR: All through the sixties and seventies.

JR: Was it exhibition square dancing?

WETR: Yes, at the auditorium.

TE: Do you have any pictures of that by any chance? This is the first time this was mentioned. We'd love to have some pictures of that.

JR: How many years did you do that?

WETR: Two or three.

WR: She married me and they kicked her off.

JR: You couldn't do it if you were married?

WETR: No.

JR: Could you go to school if you were married?

WETR: Yes. I was still in school.

JR: You could be married and go to school.

WETR: Yes. That's because I came back after we eloped, the twenty-sixth of December, I went back to school and I told them I had gotten married and the principal said, 'Well

you know what I need.' I said, 'Okay.' I had to have a doctor's certificate that I was not pregnant. So, then I got to stay in school, but I had to give up the square dance team, and that hurt my feelings because I loved to dance. But those were the rules and you abided by them.

JR: So, they would have a little band and play live music and you would dance?

WETR: Yeah.

TE: Where did you elope to?

WETR: Asheville. We got married in Fairview.

WR: Right there in Cedar Cliff.

WETR: The only thing when we had to go out for our license, I said, 'Does this have to be in the paper?' She said, 'Shhh.'

TE: Did your family know you were eloping?

WR: Hers didn't.

WETR: Eloping means nobody knows.

TE: Sometimes they do, word might have gotten out.

WR: I was chased around the countryside with a shotgun by her daddy.

WETR: And his brother.

WR: Grant? He did? I liked Grant and I liked your daddy too.

WETR: They had bigger plans for me and I only had one plan. So, I fulfilled my bucket list on the twenty-sixth of December, nineteen sixty-two.

WR: The day after Christmas. Football games were on.

JR: What does the football game have to do with your getting eloped?

WR: She took me away from it.

WETR: I did.

WR: The Colts were playing.

JR: Were you watching it on TV or something?

WETR: Right here. He was home on leave.

WR: That was right back after I got rich, I got a TV.

JR: And what, she came driving up here?

WR: No, she called me.

WETR: I had a girlfriend that was already married, she was out of high school a few years and I said, 'Bill wants to get married.' She said, 'Well how do you feel about that?' I said, 'Well, I'd really like to.' She said, 'Let's go get a blood test.' So we did. And then I came up here and I showed him my arm and he said, 'What's that?' I said, 'I got my blood test.' So he called his mother and he said, 'Mom, I need a blood test.'

WR: (?)

WETR: Yeah, you may say that, but it was it was a rough two weeks. Very rough.

JR: But your uncle married you? Is that what you said?

WETR: My uncle and my father drove the neighborhood with a shotgun. It was his buddy's father that married us. He tied a good knot.

WR: Everybody who's married, they ain't got divorced. We've been married, what? Fifty-six years this December, right?

WETR: This year, fifty-six years.

TE: Well, just from meeting you folks today and sitting here and talking with you and enjoying being on your porch and hearing all these family stories, you impress me as just being two people so in love, and that it's lasted and still carrying on and going on and I like that.

WETR: He went to our minister and he said, 'Bob, Rina and I want to get married,' and Bob says, 'I can't do it. I am too close to the family. I cannot do it.' He said, 'You're not the only minister in Asheville.' So his—I think I said this—his best buddy's father married us. His best buddy married the twenty-third of December. He was their best man. We got married the twenty-sixth of December and now we take an anniversary cruise just about every year, so we've got a cruise coming up November tenth. Hooh-rah, because that's a Marine Corps birthday.

WR: That don't mean anything to y'all.

WETR: It's been a good life. I say, 'What a ride.' He did thirty years and then they kicked him out.

WR: I always say that. It's mandatory after thirty.

WETR: But when they realized that he was over thirty, he was really close to thirty-one, he was in Saudi and he was called into the Colonel's office and he said, 'I gotta get you out of country.' He said, 'Just let me go home with the troops. It's only going to be a couple more weeks, or maybe a month.' He said, 'And give up my rank? you're leaving.'

JR: So, what did you do after he was out of the service?

WR: She got a job.

WETR: We have a two-story house. And when he started telling me what to dust, when to dust, and how to dust, I knew one of us had to get out of that house. So, I went to work.

WR: I was only in charge of one person then. I've been used to thousands.

WETR: Lucky me. So, I got a job at Carolina East Medical Center in New Bern. I worked in the Cardiac Cath Lab and, just general everything. Mainly I was a transcriptionist. I didn't have to know what the word was, I just needed to know how to spell it. And I worked there for sixteen years and he said, 'Why don't you retire?' 'What? I can retire?' And I did.

JR: And what was he doing while you—.

WETR: He was retired at forty-eight years old. I have to say that he would have my supper ready for me when I came home. And he is a good cook, let me tell you. He is good.

JR: What was your rank when you retired?

WETR: Sergeant Major. The highest enlisted rank you could go without being The Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps.

TE: Tell me what, if you would, each of you, what you like about Fairview now.

WETR: It's quiet. You don't have the hustle and bustle of anything across that mountain.

WR: Do you like Fairview?

TE: I love Fairview.

WR: Why do you like Fairview?

TE: It's quiet. I love the mountains. They're comforting. And Fairview is a community that I was looking for and found it. I'm very fortunate and I know that you all have a home in another location and so you don't have to live here, but I guess I want to know what keeps you coming here.

WETR: Feel the breeze. Where we live there's no breeze.

WR: And a bunch of bugs and a lot of heat.

WETR: Our mosquitoes need the landing strip at Cherry Point to land. They are huge and they are numerous.

TE: And what about you?

WR: About Fairview? It's like your roots are here. Mine are anyhow. Got a lot of spirits here.

WETR: There is a spirit in that house.

WR: We've seen him a couple times. Scares the — out of me. My daughter seen him one time, standing in the corner—Mother called him the Indian.

TE: Do you have any sense of who it is?

WR: No. This area right here is like a hill, right? You try to think about two hundred years ago. I had a buddy, he's from Maine. I had a buddy, he died out, but I had a buddy from Maine. He came up with me and on the first day he came up with me, and this was in early April because we came up to go fishing, trout fishing. And I said, 'Let's go find you an arrowhead.' He said, 'You ain't got no arrowheads.' I said, 'Yes, we do.' I took him right there in the woods. I wasn't there five minutes when there was an arrowhead laying right there. I used to find arrowheads laying all around here and I'd take them to school and sell them for a quarter. I sold them to Bobby Early for a quarter. I found one that looked like clear glass, like that right there. I sold it to him for a quarter. Back then a quarter was a lot of money. I don't know what Bobby ever did with them.

WETR: Several years ago, what two years ago? He and his friends built this porch and we will sit here and look at this porch and he'll say, 'I can't believe we did this.'

WR: It was a lot of nailing.

TE: And it's a memory too.

WETR: And he has a hammock that hangs over there.

WR: I got pictures here from before the porch was here. I was going through those when you all showed up.

TE: Is there any topic, any area that we haven't asked you about today that's something that you thought you might want to share and that we haven't touched upon? If so, we would love to hear it.

WR: I'm trying to get it out of my brain. It doesn't come right out.

WETR: I can tell you how I got here. As you saw the pictures on the wall, my grandparents are there. She was Emma Florence Hill. She lived in Singers Glen, Virginia. And she married George Theodore Van Pelt, who was of some German descent. I know that they celebrated a sixtieth anniversary. They had ten children. My mother was the youngest of ten and I told you—Ray, Ruth, Reetha, George, John, Jake, Marian, Melody, Roy, and Catherine. And they grew up in Broadway, Virginia and the timespan between Ray and Catherine has got to be at least twenty years, at least. So, you had brothers and sisters—there was five boys and five girls. You had the older generation of the same family that would go find work. And I asked my uncle one time, 'Uncle Jake,' I said, 'why did you move to Washington D.C.?' He said, 'Because that's where the work was.' Because Broadway was just a little tiny town, and then the next town down was Harrisonburg, which is the home of James Madison University and it is big now. Virginia has the most beautiful puffy clouds I have ever seen in my life. So, my mother went to Washington and lived with her sister, Reetha, where she met my father, who was born in Washington D.C. And the story goes that she dated Uncle Cecil, my daddy's brother, and she knew that he was not the one and then my daddy said, 'Well, Cecil, if you're not going to take her out, I am.' So, their first date was bowling, I guess that was a thing to do. They got married the sixteenth of January, nineteen forty-two. Daddy was already in the service and his name is William Harvey Taylor, he was named after his uncle who is

buried at Pleasant Grove Cemetery. Out Garren Creek. I didn't know that. Now I think he passed in nineteen sixty-five. The only thing I can think of is we were already on the west coast and long distance was not free and they just thought they'd tell me when I came home sometime, but his grave stone is up there. My mother is Sarah Catherine Van Pelt Taylor and she was born December twelfth, nineteen twenty-one. My daddy was born January first of nineteen twenty, I think. They too, when Daddy came back from the war, moved to Washington D.C. They settled in Greenbelt, Maryland. My parents were both working at the Patent Office and Washington was building and building and building by leaps and bounds and Mother said they sat down one evening and Daddy said, 'We've got to get the kids out of here.' By that time my brother had been born, eight years and ten days later after me. And then our baby sister, Wanna—. Well, my brother's name is William Harvey Taylor, Jr. She couldn't call the baby "Bill" if she was calling my Daddy "Billy," so one day she said, 'I'm just going to call him "Twig." And it stuck. He is sixty-five years old and he is Twig. We have since realized that all three children, our names start with W. When I was asking my mother what was my name going to be if I had been a boy, and she said, 'Your father never discussed a boy. Never.' I know that my grandfather, George, his father was Martin David Van Pelt. And I think he did come straight from Germany. He had two wives, one passed and he married. That's the synopsis of who I am and where I came from. When we moved to Fairview, what a cultural shock. I was either eight or ten. There was nothing and I'm used to airplanes going over and hearing sirens all night long. I think I adjusted pretty well, I did come home from school crying one day, and they wanted to know why and I said. 'Because the kids tell me I talk funny.' Daddy sat me down and he says, 'You go back to school and

tell them you're just a well-educated southerner.' Because I had the Maryland accent. My daughter has gotten on me because I say "Warshington." I have to concentrate to say, "Washington." But that's the way they say it in Maryland.

JR: You were a little more sophisticated than a lot of these other kids.

WETR: My first grade teacher wrote in my progress report that I was far too serious for a little girl my age. And I still have it. There's a lot of paperwork that I've kept from our children and I have some paintings from my granddaughter Sophia. She started painting when she was maybe two. They were so pretty I just framed them and hung them.

TE: And you, Mr. Russell? Any last thing that we didn't cover?

WR: It's hard to sum up in two hours, seventy-five years. There's so many stories out there. You could go on and put it a very boring book. I think of Bushwhacker, my bus driver, they use to come down out of Old Fort, he drove forty-three. We called him Bushwhacker. I never knew why we called him Bushwhacker. I think about my school days and I think about, you asked me what we did for fun, and there's so many things that come to mind.

TE: The school days are one of the things that is important to you.

WETR: This road used to be called Possum Trot.

WR: You must not have been here when I told them about that.

WETR: But I have a story about Possum Trot. I got on the bus at Fairview School—.

JR: Was that the Trailways bus?

WETR: School bus. And I think you would stand at the end of the road to get on my bus.

WR: Down at the bottom of the hill. Right there across from McGuins.

WETR: And the guys started teasing me. “You live up on Possum Trot.’ I said, ‘No, I don’t.’ ‘Yeah, you do.’ Big guy, he stands up, he says, ‘I live on Possum Trot.’ ‘Oh.’ Because you know, he’s six foot two and a football player.

TE: Thank you both for sharing all these precious memories that you have today with us and as Judith and I had said earlier, future generations are going to be able to hear and share your memories. So, thank you both very much. We appreciate it.

WETR: I have something written on the back side of my kitchen counter. “Loved you then, love you now. Always have, always will.”

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Alice Helms, May 6, 2020